THE LICENSE THEY TAKE

By ELLIOTT FLOWER

I'VE been dipping into poetry," remarked the Casual Caller: "not as a writer, you understand, but as a reader. At that, I think I could do as well as some of them, if I could also write my own license."

"Write your own license?" I repeated in bewilderment.

"Poetic license," he explained. "It's evident to me that many of the big guns do that very thing; for no self-respecting license giver would ever license some of the things they do. The big guns have all the best of it anyway. The mere versifier must stick to the rules of the game or be treated as a joke; but the fellow who can get across with the idea that he's a real poet can make his own rules and take liberties with riming and commonsense that would make a gargoyle ashamed of himself, which no one could do under a regular journeyman poet's license.

"Take 'Lochinvar,' for instance:

"So light to the croup the fair lady he swung;
So light to the saddle before her he sprung!

"How could he? I ask you that. With the lady once mounted, how could he spring to the saddle without kicking her off in the act—unless he mounted backward? And who but a poet himself would license a poet to make his hero do such a fool thing as that? Those Netherby people would have died laughing at the spectacle. And that's only the beginning; for we also have:

"And save his good broadsword he weapons had none;
He rode all unarmed and he rode all alone.

"Silly, isn't it, to crack a man up as riding unarmed when he carried a broadsword that ranked with the weapons of those days about where a machine gun does now? We wouldn't boast of the nerve of a man these days who went to call on his ladylove with a gatling, would we?

"These poetry heroes do such very foolish things! There's also 'Horatius,' you know:

"So he spake, and, speaking, sheathed
His good sword by his side,
And, with his harness on his back,
Plunged headlong in the tide.

"Can you imagine it? A man with a couple of tons of iron attached to his person, and very likely a spiked helmet, diving headfirst into a river! Why, he'd have spiked himself to the bottom so hard that he'd be there yet! It's supremely ridiculous, and no one but a major poet would have dared even hint at such a thing. What Horatius really did, if he had the sense of a brass pup, was to jump in feet first, so that he could begin churning himself to the surface the minute he struck the water.

"But it's when he monkeys with ships and railroad trains that the poet becomes most absurd:

"'We are lost!' the Captain shouted,
As he staggered down the stairs.

"Remember that old favorite, illustrating the power of faith? Read it to a seafaring man some day, and hear him snort! Why, a Captain who'd leave his post in a storm and go skipping down to the cabin to throw a scare into his passengers couldn't hold a job as mule driver for a canal boat! Think of it! A great storm, when he's needed to handle the ship, and the poet sends him bellowing into the cabin to start a panic: with no reason for it either; for we learn later that they 'anchored safe in harbor when the sun was shining clear'! It's on a par with the engineer's story:

"The train was heavily laden, so I let my engine rest,
Climbing the grading slowly till we reached the upland's crest.

"I put that up to a railroad man once, and he told me with much emphasis that any engineer who let his engine rest on an upgrade with a heavily loaded train would be chased off the right of way with bricks—if he got his train through, which he probably wouldn't. The chances are the train would slip back and pile up in a ditch somewhere while the engine was resting.

"But for supreme idiocy commend me to 'Casabianca.' Why, say, if that boy had been left in a house, and the house had caught fire, and the boy had refused to let the firemen rescue him because Papa had told him not to go away, you'd be sorry for him, of course; but you'd never think of cracking him up as anything but an example of unprecedented imbecility! You'd reason, 'Well, that kid didn't have sense enough to grow up anyway,' and let it go at that. Yet the poet goes to work and roasts him to death on a burning ship, just because Papa isn't there, and expects you to applaud the inhuman act. It makes me tired!

"And the riming that some of these big guns do is simply atrocious! A little fellow couldn't get across with it in a thousand years. Here take 'Mandalay,' for example:

"On the road to Mandalay,
Where the old flotilla lay,
With our sick beneath the awnings when we went to Mandalay.

"What kind of riming is that—lay, lay, lay? It's repetition, not riming at all. You couldn't get a license to do that kind of thing, and neither could I; so it's plain enough that Kipling must have filled out his own license, and the public stood for it. It isn't fair; but it's done all the time—by the big people. Dig into their work a bit and see if it isn't."

Well, I have, and I am sorry now that I listened to the Casual Caller. I can no longer read poetry with my former careless appreciation of it: I have become too critical.

"RISKING LIFE FOR THE MOVIES"

THE dangers shown in moving picture plays are much more real than most people believe. Dummies are out of fashion. Even substitutes are no longer popular with the leading players themselves. There has grown up a sort of feeling that the actors must play their parts all the way through.

The reason for this will be explained by **Robert Sterling Yard** in his article on **RISKING LIFE FOR THE MOVIES,** which will lead our next SUNDAY MAGAZINE. **Mr. Yard** also has good stories to tell of thrills that never get into the films at all—because they come from accidents. He gives intimate glimpses of players whose names are widely known, and of things that have happened to them which are scarcely believable. There are as many thrills in his brilliantly written article as there are in the best film you ever saw.

IN this number begins the new serial by **Louis Tracy,** for whose stories so many of our readers have been asking. **FLOWER OF THE GORSE** is a fine story, told, as **Mr. Tracy** always tells his stories, with a sure touch. You may read the first instalment here; so there is no need of talking about that. But even if you are among those who never read a serial, please promise that you will read the instalment in our next number; for in that there is a shipwreck and a rescue that will make the blood gallop through your veins.

DO you remember those wonderful women with whom **Torchy** went to live,—Aunt Zenobia and Aunt Martha,—who adopted him from the streets, as it were? It is like meeting old friends to hear of them again. The tale in our next issue is **ZENOBIA DIGS UP A LATE ONE;** so you may know that she is its heroine. But you never could guess just what it is like.

SIDNEY H. RIESENBERG has a double-page illustration in color picturing the duel between Henry Clay and John Randolph, for which **Edgar Allen Forbes** furnishes the text. Both the painting and the story are among the most interesting in the series.